



# REFLECTIONS

## BEETECNIOVS

Upon a Delicate Treasure!

June 2004

Providing Stewardship for Kings River Lands

## Tom's of Main Grant

By Kathy Omachi

### El Río Reyes Trust Receives \$5,000 Grant from National Park Foundation and Tom's of Maine

El Río de los Reyes en Reedley Conservation Trust (El Río Reyes Trust) announced today that it has received a \$5,000 grant from the National Park Service Foundation, the official nonprofit partner of America's National Parks, to be used for the a low water crossing on Wahtoke Creek a tributary in the Kings River system of Fresno County, California.

Connie Krahn, Board President of El Río Reyes Trust, states, "The award from the National Park Foundation and Tom's of Maine grant continues to move forward the trust's mission to work with individuals, businesses, other nonprofit organizations, and agency partners to provide stewardship in preserving, conserving, and restoring ecological life, scenic, and historic sites on the Kings River. The trust endeavors to develop educational opportunities and recreational uses consistent with the protection of the river as a treasured natural resource."

This grant to El Río Reyes Trust is part of Tom's of Maine National Rivers Awareness Program, of which the National Park Foundation is a key partner. The Rivers Awareness Program will enable partner organizations of the national Park Service Rivers & Trails Program to accomplish tangible, on-the-ground conservation projects along specific rivers while increasing public awareness of local river issues. The Rivers & Trails program provides National Park Service professionals to work with community groups and local and State governments to conserve river, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways. Funding from the Rivers Awareness Program will help El Río Reyes Trust - plus ten other projects around the country - implement plans the National Park Service has helped them make for protecting or enhancing rivers that their communities care about.

Over the past two years, the Foundation has granted more than \$70,000 to local conservation groups through Tom's of Maine's National Rivers Awareness Program.

"Rivers are a vital part of the American landscape and the American story," said Jim Maddy, president, National Park Foundation. "Tom's of Maine is a great partner to help ensure that America's rivers continue to enrich our lives."

## Walks Along the Kings

By Kent Kinney

### Members and Guests Enjoyed Walks Along the Kings

Two river walks were hosted this spring by el Rio Reyes Trust and Reedley College forestry students. On Saturday, February 28 a guided walk along the Kings River on the Reedley College campus was enjoyed by 28 members, guests and students. The activity provided an opportunity for participants to explore the 380-acre college farm as they focused their attention on the more than one-mile long riparian corridor that is the outstanding natural feature adorning this campus.

Students who are enrolled in the Reedley College environmental interpretation class served as docents while guests walked along the mature valley oak trees and observed an abundance of wildlife. The college forestry program has established its involvement in community service



Poole's Ferry Anchor Tree

projects as a tool to provide professional experience to students pursuing a career in natural resource work.

A highlight of the day was a visit to the Poole's Ferry river crossing. Visitors were able to see the east-shore anchor tree that once held the ferry cable. This was one of the main routes across the Kings River for horse-drawn wagons

that transported early settlers and supplies throughout the Central San Joaquin Valley. Although the massive old tree fell into the river a couple of years ago, it is still an impressive sight to witness.

On Sunday, April 4, Reedley College students again teamed up with the El Rio Reyes Trust to guide members and guests in to another riparian area. The Fresno County Kings River Greenbelt Park on Piedra Road was visited that morning. This land, acquired by the county in the 1960s, exhibits a diverse population of native plants and animals. There are, however, invasive weed species that are encroaching and so there was an opportunity for visitors to learn about the need for proper land management actions. The Fresno Weir, which diverts water from the Kings River into agricultural irrigation canals, was a point of interest explored. One fascinating stop during the walking tour was at granite grinding holes that were utilized by Native Americans. Outcroppings of granite rock are rare in the valley floor and present the visitor with a unique perspective of



Fresno Weir

how people must have relied on the physical environment in historic times.

These walks were an enjoyable opportunity to experience the Kings River riparian environment. The contribution of Reedley College forestry students as guides was appreciated by all of the participants. The El Rio Reyes Trust is looking forward to this type of partnership activity in the future. Members and guests are encouraged to participate in river walks along the Kings River next year. Watch your newsletter and visit the website for a schedule of events.



Byrd Slough

## Floating the Kings River

By Frank Fonseca

Have you ever considered a float on the Kings River? Do you know every summer hundreds of people do it? Most are from the Reedley area, however, some drive hundreds of miles to enjoy the experience. We are truly fortunate to have such a resource in our back yard.

For me there is nothing quite as relaxing as a leisurely float down the Kings River. The best time to go is mid-morning as the day is just starting to warm up. I also like this time of day because few people are ever out on the river that early and the quiet is broken only by the sounds of flowing water, ducks, frogs, feeding fish, hawks and an occasional peacock. I have also seen herons, coyotes, foxes, possums and skunks on the shoreline. Rafts, kayaks and canoes are so quiet that it's easy to approach very close to the river's wildlife before being discovered. A word of warning to those seeking to enjoy the river's natural beauty, if you leave after 11 a.m. on a summer weekend you will probably encounter large groups of floaters with radios, water guns and loud voices. Floating then is more of a social experience and enjoyable in its own way.

My first trip floating the Kings was in 1978. A group of friends invited me to float from Pine Flat Dam to Winton Park (30 to 35 minutes). We all used inner tubes. That was before the power plant was built so the water was warmer than it is today. Because the power plant uses water from the bottom of the lake dam releases are much colder now. Good for trout but not people. Using inner tubes today would be a very numbing experience.

On a scale of 1 to 6 with 1 being flat water and 6 being unridable, the Pine Flat to Winton Park section is between a 1 and 2. It's not too fast and there are intermittent stretches of modest white water. If you are in a multi-chambered raft, canoe or kayak you can float or paddle past Winton Park as far as the Cobbles Weir (commonly known as the Alta Weir) with no portages necessary (15 –20 minutes). Unless you know someone who has been on the river below the weir and knows the way, I strongly discourage anyone from going any farther. There are numerous side channels which if taken can result in dangerous and even life threatening situations. There is also one very low bridge and a difficult portage around the Fresno Weir before reaching Highway 180.

For those who want flat water (Class 1) and enjoy wildlife viewing, I recommend floating from the Goodfellow Avenue Bridge to the Olsen Street Bridge (3.5 to 4.5 hours by raft and 2 to 2 ½ hours by kayak or canoe). You can also float from the Manning Avenue Bridge to the Olsen Street Bridge (30 to 35 minutes) if you don't want to spend half your day on the river. Besides the put-in locations I have mentioned, there are no other public access points. The river is almost completely bordered by private

property so once you've started down it there is no turning back or getting out until the next bridge.

Your safety while floating or paddling on the Kings River should always be a primary concern in planning your trip. The power of water is immense and unforgiving even in Class 1 water. Always go with someone who knows the way. While inexpensive rafts with only one main air chamber are legal below Highway 180 they are not recommended. At a minimum, your raft should have two main air chambers, each capable of providing enough floatation for everyone in the raft. Usually, this type of raft is also made of heavier materials and more resistant to being punctured. Life jackets are highly recommended for anyone in flowing water greater than Class 1. Of course, any non-swimmer or weak swimmer should wear a life jacket whenever they are on or near the river. To prevent any heat related illness you should always wear a hat or sun visor and bring plenty of water in addition to your beverage of choice. Sunscreen is a

## The Elderberry Bush and the Valley Longhorn Elderberry Beetle

By Kent Kinney

Blue Elderberry, *Sambucus mexicana*, is a shrub common to the Kings River area. It is a member of the honeysuckle family. In the Springtime tiny yellow flowers form large obvious groups that cover most of the plant. Elderberry then bears distinctive small dark-blue fruits that hang in hand-size clusters until June to July. The compound, leaves are light green and usually are covered with tiny white hairs that give them a fuzzy feel to the touch. As with many other riparian species effects of human development have greatly decreased the abundance of this native plant. It is estimated that over 90 percent of the riparian habitat of the Central Valley has been eliminated over the last 150 years.



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Elderberry plants provide habitat to the valley longhorn elderberry beetle (*Desmocerus californicus dimorphus*). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed this insect as a threatened species in 1980 under authority of the En-

dangered Species Act. This rarely-scene, wood-boring beetle is fully protected by federal law. The valley elderberry longhorn beetle is completely dependent on its host plant, elderberry, which is a common component of the remaining riparian forests and adjacent upland habitats of California's Central Valley. Use of the elderberry by the beetle is rarely apparent. Frequently, the only exterior evidence of the elderberry's use by the beetle is an exit hole created by the larva just prior to the pupal stage. The life cycle takes one or two years to complete. The animal spends most of its life in the larval stage, living within the stems of an elderberry plant. Adult emergence is from late March through June, about the same time the elderberry produces flowers. The adult stage is short-lived.

A biological survey of plants may be required before projects that disturb the plants occur. If suitable habitat for the beetle occurs on the project site these areas must be protected from disturbance during the construction and operation of the project. When possible, projects should be designed to avoid elderberry plants and provide a buffer around them. More specific information may be found by contacting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game.



Photo: Ted Gantenbein, California EPA, Department of Pesticide Regulation

## El Río Reyes Trust Website

By Ted Tartaglia

At long last, the Trust's website is up and running. The address is: [www.elrioreyestrust.org](http://www.elrioreyestrust.org).

The idea of establishing a web site is easy; actually developing one is a bit more complicated. The first, most basic question is, what do you want on it? Sounds easy, doesn't it. Well, let's start with the home page. It should be eye catching, interesting, and convey something about the site that invites the visitor to stop and explore further. No problem! No problem until you transfer your idea from paper to the actual web page. Then, what looked so good doesn't seem to be as great as first thought. Maybe we should change this word; maybe we should take this out and put this in; maybe if we moved this to here the page would look better and make more sense. Many, many, many changes were made to get it right.

The easiest part of the project was gathering information about the Kings River. There are a number of agencies and local historians who have compiled a wealth of information about the river. We plan to provide more river infor-

mation in the future that we hope you will find informative, interesting, and useful.

This is a glimpse into the process that Connie Krahn and I went through as we laid out the pages of our website. We had volunteered to work on the content of the site bring it to the board for approval. As we were struggling to get everything just right, I'm not sure how many times we both asked the question: what did we get ourselves into? I'm happy to report that, with the project completed, Connie



and I remain friends.

It also I wish to emphasize that, while Connie and I did most of the grunt work, this project was a group effort and everyone involved contributed valuable ideas and suggestions that made the project a success.

It also helps to have a great web site development technician. We chose Benjamin Kirk who came with the web site design and graphics and is responsible for the look and feel of the site. Ben helped guide us through the process of designing the site and contributed a lot of the pictures found on the site.

## A Day With The Kings River

By Ted Tartaglia

On May 25, 2004, Kelly's Beach, Kings Canyon Unified School District and el Río Reyes Trust sponsored A Day With The Kings River.

At 9:00 A.M., five bus loads of sixth graders arrived at Kelley's Beach where they were divided into three groups. The three groups spread out along the beach and view presentations by three different groups at three different stations. The first group learned about the history of the Kings River, the history of Pine Flat Dam and the responsibility of water users not to pollute the river but to keep it clean. The second group learned about water safety and rescue and the third group learned about fly fishing and observed a dem-

(Continued on page 5)

## Upcoming Events

### Bob Frisch Memorial Ride September 11, 2004

El Río Reyes Trust will host its sixth annual poker ride on Saturday, September 11, 2004. This fundraising event was developed by Bob Frisch and it is fitting the ride be named for Bob after his sudden death in 2002. The ride will originate at the Reedley College Horse Unit. Registration will start at 9:00 A.M. and at 10:00 A.M. the riders will begin a scenic four-mile guided tour on the Reedley College trail along the Kings River. A tri-tip barbecue lunch with all the trimmings will be served when the riders return.

Pre-registration due by September 10<sup>th</sup> - \$25.00

Registration at the door on September 11<sup>th</sup> - \$30.00

Checks payable to: el Río Reyes Trust

Mail to: P.O. Box 1339, Reedley, CA 93543

### Kings River Cleanup Day September 25, 2004

El Río Reyes Trust and Mike Kelly of Kelly's Beach are proud to announce the 2004 Kings River Cleanup Day. The cleanup will start at the Goodfellow Avenue Bridge on the north end and at the Olson Avenue Bridge on the south end and proceed to Kelly's Beach where lunch will be served to all participants.

To all Kings River floaters, fishing enthusiasts, boaters, campers, swimmers, and river watchers. Organize your groups; challenge your friends and family to participate in Kings River Cleanup Day. With your help we all can play an important part in the Kings River Legacy.

The river will probably be low but there will still be some water flowing in September. Participants will be wading the river collecting trash. You will need to wear shorts/swimsuits, water shoes or tennis shoes.

Please mark your calendar for September 25<sup>th</sup> and give us a call to let us know how many will be coming.

Meeting place and time: 9:00 A.M. at Kelly's Beach on the Kings River (Manning Avenue and Kings River Road).

Questions on any event? Phone or e-mail: el Río Reyes Trust 559-638-9617 or [conniekrahn@elrioreyestrust.org](mailto:conniekrahn@elrioreyestrust.org)

(Continued from page 4)

onstration of fly-tying. Each session lasted about thirty minutes and on completion each group rotated to the next station.

About 10:45 A.M., a hot dog lunch was served to the kids by Mike Kelley and crew. About 11:00 A.M., the second group of students arrived and were served lunch. After lunch, the first group departed to go back to school and the second group was divided up and the presentation process started anew.

During lunch, a spectacular dramatization occurred. Look for details in the next newsletter and also a full article on the event.

This event originated because of Mike Kelly's concern that too many drownings occur in the river and perhaps lives could be saved by such a program.

The program exceeded all expectations and will be repeated next year.

## Reedley Parkway Tree Planting

By Ted Tartaglia

In November 2003 and January 2004, volunteers gathered on the Reedley Parkway to plant approximately 410 trees on the segment between Dinuba Avenue and Buttonwillow Avenue.

Volunteers were divided into several groups. Some planted trees, some staked the newly planted trees and some performed touchup work such as enlarging tree wells adjusting planting height. The volunteers were first given instruction in proper tree planting by the Reedley College Forestry Club and were then set to work.



El Río Reyes Members Planting Trees

There were about 125 volunteers at the November planting and about 100 at the January planting. The volunteers consisted of individuals, civic, school groups and other groups including several members of el Río Reyes Trust. Some members of the City Council, city staff, and

city employees also helped out. The volunteers were enthusiastic, energetic, and hard working.

This completes the planned landscaping of the parkway and what a difference some trees make. This section of the parkway looked pretty barren last October.

The parkway is now about 2.3 miles long and provides a safe place for walking, jogging, biking and other forms of recreation, plus it really beautifies the old rail road route. The parkway is a really great asset to Reedley that we can all be proud of.



Community Parkway at 8th Street

## Trash – It Lives a Long Time

Have you ever wondered how long it takes Mother Nature to destroy a tin can or a glass bottle?

The following list shows the number of years it takes the environment to break down common items that people throw into our waters:

Glass Bottle:	1 million years
Fishing line:	600 years
Plastic bottle:	450 years
Disposable diapers:	450 years
Plastic cup:	50 years
Tin can:	50 years
Plastic bag:	10-20 years
Cigarette filter:	10-20 years

Think before you toss trash into our waters!!

Information source: U.S. National Park Service, Mote Marine Labs, Sarasota